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LOS ANGELES TIMES
 19 April 1985

Boyce Warns Others to Avoid Life of Spying

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WASHINGTON—Christopher J. Boyce, whose sale of CIA satellite secrets to Soviet agents was one of the nation's gravest espionage crimes of the 1970s, pleaded before a Senate panel Thursday for improvements in U.S. security procedures and for other young persons to avoid his fate.

In an emotional, hourlong statement, the 31-year-old Boyce said his 21 months of spying at TRW Inc. offered no "James Bond" thrills and brought him "only depression and a hopeless enslavement to an inhuman, uncaring foreign bureaucracy."

"As we sit here, a half-dozen, perhaps a dozen, perhaps more Americans are operatives of the KGB," the former Californian told the Senate Governmental Affairs permanent investigations subcommittee, which is examining how federal security clearances are granted.

"Perhaps some of them have been in place for years. I tell you that none of them are happy men or women," he said during testimony described by Sen. William S. Cohen (R-Me.) as "one of the most powerful and poignant statements we have ever heard."

Boyce, who is serving a 68-year prison sentence for espionage and for robbing banks after escaping from the Lompoc Federal Correctional Institution in 1980, said that "for whatever reason a person begins his involvement . . . the original intent and purpose becomes lost in the ignominy of the ongoing nightmare."

Although Boyce took the witness stand in his defense during his 1977 spy trial, his Senate testimony Thursday—in which he paused to fight back tears four times—provided his fullest statement to date on his actions and reflections as a Soviet collaborator.

He told senators that he had received a top-secret clearance from the government in 1975 after only a cursory investigation in which he was never interviewed about his anti-Establishment attitudes, which were well known among his friends.

Boyce said the government interviewed only his parents and some of their acquaintances, "who lived in another world" and knew nothing of his opinions.

"Had the investigators asked any of my friends what I thought of the U.S. government, and in particular the CIA, I would never have gotten the job," Boyce said. "Had they asked, they would have learned that I had first begun smoking 'pot' at 16 and that I had experimented with a variety of other drugs."

He said he was hired only because his father, a former FBI agent, knew a top security official at the company.

At the Redondo Beach-based TRW, where Boyce worked as a clerk assigned to a highly sensitive satellite project, plant security was "a joke—almost laughable," making it easy to photograph thousands of documents to pass on to Soviet agents, he said.

Parties in 'Black Vault'

Boyce—who testified before the subcommittee while guarded by a dozen federal marshals—described the informal atmosphere and lax security at TRW and said his co-workers never suspected he was cooperating with the Soviets.

"We regularly partied and boozed it up during working hours within the 'black vault,'" the super-secret room housing the CIA satellite project, he said. "Bacardi

rum was usually stored behind the crypto machines."

Boyce said a code-destruction machine similar to a blender "was used for making banana daiquiris and Mai Tais. On occasion, the project security manager would join us for a drink on the house."

Boyce, whose case was recounted in the best-selling book "The Falcon and the Snowman" and in a subsequent film, said he understood that TRW has tightened security in recent years. Witnesses from the company confirmed this in later testimony.

So lax was security at TRW, Boyce said, that "my immediate supervisor once made a security badge with a monkey's face on it and, to everyone's amusement, used it to come in and out of the building."

With tears in his eyes, Boyce said he no longer is "a rebellious 21" and agreed to testify "in the hope that I am performing a constructive act."

He concluded: "I only wish that before more Americans take that irreversible step, they could know what I now know, that they are bringing down upon themselves heartache more heavy than a mountain."